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TAGS: [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN TRADE MINISTER BOTERO ON U.S. TPA,
AGREEMENT WITH CUBA

Classified By: ECON COUNSELOR LAWRENCE J. GUMBINER FOR REASONS 1.4(D) A
ND (E)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) GOC Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce Jorge Botero told visiting WHA official Matthew Rooney that on October 11 the Andean Community (CAN) will authorize Colombia to regulate beef imports in accord with its commitment to the USG. The Colombians will await resolution of the beef issue to formally confirm a Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) signing date, but are planning for a November 22 signing in Washington. Botero is prepared to present the TPA text to the Colombian Congress the day following signing, but only if there is no risk that the USG will pressure Colombia to re-negotiate portions of the text. The Minister explained that the trade agreement under negotiation with Cuba, which is expected to be signed in November, is economically insignificant but serves GOC political interests. End Summary.

TAKING CARE OF THE BEEF

¶2. (C) Rooney and EconCouns paid an October 5 call on Botero, who was joined by Ministry advisor Alfredo Ramos. Botero stated that on September 26 an Andean Community technical committee (COTASA) had approved a resolution authorizing member states to establish their own zootechnical import conditions. This was necessary, he explained, because by previous decision authority for such matters presently rests with the CAN. The resolution was approved by Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Bolivia was absent, and has yet to comment on the proposed change. Botero stated that he had spoken with CAN Secretary General Alan Wagner earlier in the day, and Wagner assured him that the resolution would be issued on October 11, regardless of whether Bolivia weighs in with a position.

¶3. (C) Once the resolution has been approved, Colombia will proceed to issue its decree authorizing the import of 30-month and older beef. Post has delivered a draft of the resolution to Washington agencies for review. Botero made a pitch to for the USG to certify Colombian beef as free of hoof-and-mouth at the same time as Colombia authorizes U.S. beef imports; this would help politically in Colombia, he

explained. Rooney stated that we would look into the matter and get back to him. (Comment: There is no chance that this certification will happen prior to October 31. GOC Agriculture Minister Arias understands this; apparently, Botero does not. End Comment.)

GOC EYES NOVEMBER 22 FOR THE SIGNING

¶4. (C) Botero recognizes that there will be no confirmed signing date until the beef issue is resolved. He stated that the GOC would like to sign as soon as possible, and is tentatively planning on November 22 in Washington (the first day feasible under U.S. law). President Uribe would not attend the signing in deference to USG interests in maintaining a low profile event. Botero believes that the agreement would either be signed by the Secretary State and GOC Foreign Minister Araujo, or by USTR and himself; the latter grouping being more likely. For political reasons, the GOC would prefer to sign the agreement either at the IDB or the OAS instead of USTR offices or the Colombian Embassy.

¶5. (C) The Minister indicated that as soon as the signing takes place - "the following day" - the GOC would be prepared to submit the agreement to the Colombian Congress for approval. However, should the Colombians perceive - in the wake of the U.S. elections - a risk that parts of the agreement might be subject to re-negotiation, then the Colombians will hold back in order to avoid having to re-submit the accord at a later date. Botero does not anticipate problems in getting the agreement approved in Colombia, but notes the process can be lengthy. He estimates 3 months for approval in the Congress, and then 3-4 months for review by the Constitutional Court. Botero utilized this

timeframe to emphasize the importance of ATPDEA extension for Colombia, arguing that even if the TPA were to be approved by the U.S. Congress in a lame duck session, approval in Colombia would stretch well into 2007.

¶6. (C) The GOC is well aware of the entry into force requirements once the agreement is approved in both countries, Botero continued. They have noticed problems experienced with the Chile and CAFTA accords. The GOC is already working on a list of legal and regulatory changes that they will have to implement to bring the agreement into force; some will require CAN approval, some the GOC can do through regulation, and some will require legislative approval. Botero recognizes that it's premature to work with the USG on this issue, but stands ready to do so when the timing is appropriate.

CUBA AGREEMENT OF POLITICAL, NOT ECONOMIC, IMPORT

¶7. (C) Botero briefed on the latest developments in Colombian negotiations with Cuba, which he anticipates will be completed in November. The agreement will be very limited, covering only manufactured products. No agricultural products are included, and there are no chapters on investment, IPR, services, dispute resolution, or the like. "This is not a free trade agreement" he explained. According to Botero, Fidel Castro told him during the Minister's visit in the spring that Cuba "no longer dreams of autarky" given that the island is only capable of producing rum, tobacco, pharmaceutical products, and tourism. Everything else, Castro stated, Cuba has to import. Botero indicated that the accord has limited economic significance for Colombia. GOC interests are political and twofold: First, having an agreement with Cuba would boost Colombian bona fides in the peace process with certain guerrilla groups; second, it would smooth the way for approval of the U.S. TPA in the Colombian Congress by blunting some leftist opposition.

